

## **Wetlands and Wildlife Sanctuaries to Visit in the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area**

There's probably a wetland to discover near you. To find it, contact your local parks department, state natural resource agency, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://www.refuges.fws.gov>). The following are just a few of the places you can visit to learn about wetlands in the DC area.

**Audubon Naturalist Society.** 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, MD.

The home of the national birding and nature preservation society is a wonderful place for nature walks and pond exploration. There is a visitors' center and bookstore on the property. Call (301)653-9188 or visit <http://www.audubonnaturalist.org>

**Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.** Key Wallace Drive, Cambridge, MD.

Blackwater is representative of many types of Chesapeake Bay habitats and is home to numerous species of birds, mammals, and other wildlife, many of which are threatened or endangered. Visitors can get close to nature on several walking trails and a "wildlife drive" that leads guests by car or by foot along five miles of marshes, woods, fields and fresh water ponds. There is also a visitors' center with exhibits and daily film showings. Call (410)228-2677 or visit <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/baylinks/24.html>

**Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve.** George Washington Parkway

Located on the west bank of the Potomac River near Alexandria, Dyke Marsh consists of approximately 380 acres of tidal marsh, floodplain, and swamp forest. Managed by the National Park Service, the marsh represents the largest remaining piece of freshwater tidal wetlands in the Washington Metropolitan area. A trail known as the "haul road" leads visitors into the marsh. Call (703)289-2500 or visit <http://www.nps.gov/archive/gwmp/dyke-marsh.htm>

**Huntley Meadows Park.** 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria, VA 22306.

Huntley Meadows lies in a lowland that was carved out by an ancient meander of the Potomac River. The resulting freshwater wetland is one of the rarest habitats left in Fairfax County. Its 1,425 acres harbor majestic forest, wildflower-speckled meadows and vast wetlands bursting with life. Call (703)768-2525 or visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley/index.htm>

**Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary.** 1361 Wrighton Road, Lothian, MD 20711

Jug Bay consists of more than 1400 acres of tidal freshwater wetlands, forests, meadows and fields along the Patuxent River in southern Anne Arundel County, just 20 miles from Washington, DC. More than 12 miles of trails offer ample opportunities to explore the aquatic plants, birds, reptiles, mammals, and amphibians that call these wetlands home. Call (410)741-9330 or visit <http://www.jugbay.org>.

**Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens.** Anacostia Avenue at Douglas Street, NE, Washington, DC.

Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, a National Capital Park, is a good place to study wetland life in the DC area. The aquatic gardens are part of a 14-acre marshland area in Anacostia Park. Visitors may walk along the 1.5 mile Garden River Trail and see the water lilies and lotus the park is known for, as well as a variety of plants and animals, including raccoons, muskrats, turtles and beavers. There is a visitors' center, and park rangers offer walking tours. Call (202) 426-6905 or visit <http://www.nps.gov/kepa/>

**Leesylvania State Park.** 2001 Daniel K. Ludwig Drive, Woodbridge, VA.

Leesylvania State Park fronts Neabsco Creek, Powells Creek and the Potomac River with about two miles of shoreline. The Park's 510 acres represent about one-quarter of a former tobacco cultivation estate that has been allowed to revert to woodlands. Its network of nature trails and public boat ramps provide considerable access to the river and its wetlands. Call (703) 670-0372 or visit

<http://www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/leesylva>

**Mason Neck State Park.** Lorton, VA. Located on a peninsula formed by Pohick Bay, Belmont Bay and the Potomac River, Mason Neck is the site of several coastal wetland areas. It boasts an active heron rookery and is home to bald eagles. It attracts migrating birds, including whistling swans and assorted wildlife. Regular guided canoe trips are scheduled in spring and summer. Call (703) 550-0362 or visit

<http://www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/masonnec.htm>

**Mckee Beshler Wildlife Management Area.** Montgomery County, MD. This 2,000 acre Wildlife Management Area is located near Gaithersburg and Seneca Creek State Park and borders on the C & O Canal National Historical Park. Forests flooded in the fall and winter form "greentree reservoirs," which attract wood ducks and other water fowl which migrate through or spend the winter here. More than 200 species of birds have been documented over the years by local bird clubs. For more information, visit <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/central/mb.asp>

**National Aquarium in Baltimore.** Pier 3, 501 E. Pratt St., Baltimore, MD. You may think about the National Aquarium as home to various sea life, but wetland creatures live here as well. The Allegheny Pond exhibit features bullfrogs, painted and softshell turtles and an assortment of small fish. For information, call 410-576-3800 or visit <http://www.aqua.org/>

**National Wildlife Visitor Center.** 10901 Scarlet Tanger Loop, Laurel, MD. This huge science and environmental education center is located on the 12,750 Patuxent Research Refuge. The visitors' center offers interactive exhibits that focus on migratory bird routes, wildlife habitats, programs and group tours. Call (301) 497-5760 or visit <http://patuxent.fws.gov/vcdefault.html>

**National Zoo - Wetlands Exhibit.** 3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Visit the Wetlands Exhibit at the Zoo and learn about the value and disappearance of wetlands. At the Bird House see many of the birds that depend on wetlands for food, breeding grounds and migratory rest stops. Call (202) 763-4717 to ask about tours and educational events or visit <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/default.cfm>

**Theodore Roosevelt Island.** George Washington Parkway near Rosslyn

This 91 acre island in the middle of the Potomac River between Georgetown and Rosslyn serves as a memorial to our 26<sup>th</sup> President. Part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, the island boasts a number of interpretive trails through marsh, swamp, and forest. Call (703)289-2550 or visit

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/gwmp/tri.htm>